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General and complete disarmament

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary General

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Replies received from Member States	2
	Cambodia	2
	Lebanon	2
	Mexico	3
	Panama	5
	Qatar	5
	Serbia	6
	Spain	6
	Ukraine	8

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/44, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", the General Assembly, convinced that conventional arms control needed to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts, since most threats to peace and security in the post-cold-war era arose mainly among States located in the same region or subregion, decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to it at its sixty-third session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 14 March 2008 the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies have been received from the following States: Cambodia, Lebanon, Mexico, Panama, Qatar, Serbia, Spain and Ukraine. These replies are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Member States

Cambodia

[Original: English]
[16 May 2008]

1. Cambodia has hosted and initiated a number of conferences and seminars in the region and subregion and has been constantly working to reduce small arms and light weapons. With our consistent commitment to the reduction of small arms, Cambodia is on the right track in bringing peace to our people throughout the whole country. In addition, our long-standing experience has been recognized and supported by the international community. At the Ministerial Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Hanoi in November 2005, Cambodia was assigned to take the lead in regional arms control.

2. With good cooperation with foreign donors, Cambodia received funds and technical assistance from the European Union Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia (EU-ASAC) for project implementation from 2000 to 2007. The Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence had served as the commanding headquarters to achieve the goal of reducing conventional weapons in both the region and the subregion.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[23 May 2008]

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels:

There should be absolute commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy represented by the United Nations and respect for the Charter of the United Nations in this regard.

Each regional State concerned should give an undertaking of implementation, thereby preventing repetition of the dual standards which have been applied in respect of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and should be held accountable in case of non-compliance.

Legislation should be promulgated at the regional and international levels with the aim of restricting the proliferation of such arms, while reserving the option of their being employed by individuals or communities in order to resist occupation or defend territory.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[8 May 2008]

1. Mexico considers that conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels is a fundamental factor in confidence-building and the prevention of conflicts between States. It therefore suggests the following principles for the promotion of regional and subregional agreements:

(a) Commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the right of self-defence; international law, in particular the principle of security; and international conventions on arms control;

(b) Respect for confidence-building measures and compliance with obligations intended to implement them; and

(c) Transparency and good faith in information exchange.

2. As a tool to support the implementation of the above principles, a standardization mechanism should be established both for conventional arms and for weapons of mass destruction, and agreements in that regard should be negotiated at the regional and subregional levels.

3. Among the major challenges and obstacles to conventional arms control, Mexico has identified the following:

(a) The lack of harmonization in the marking systems of the various companies that manufacture arms and ammunition;

(b) The absence of a harmonized register of firearms, ammunition and explosives that could be consulted by the authorities directly responsible for combating illicit trafficking in this type of material;

(c) The absence of a regional register of the "ballistic fingerprint" of each firearm;

(d) The need for greater commitment on the part of States to deal expeditiously with requests for cooperation in the tracing of firearms, ammunition and explosives;

(e) The relative ease with which conventional arms can be obtained in countries where their sale is not strictly regulated; and

(f) The high degree of mobility and relatively low price of conventional arms.

Action at the national level

4. With regard to measures for transparency in the acquisition, development and deployment of conventional and strategic weapons, Mexico provides information annually to the United Nations for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and to the Organization of American States under the standardized international reporting system on military expenditure. Such reporting helps to strengthen confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

5. Mexico has an Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS), which is a register of 66,000 ballistic fingerprints both of seized weapons and of spent casings and fired bullets recovered at crime scenes. There is also interconnected IBIS equipment in the Federal District, Guadalajara in the State of Jalisco, and Reynosa in the State of Tamaulipas.

6. Mexico is currently developing a national register of ballistic fingerprints, which will allow for greater control over seized weapons and weapons held by police forces.

7. A national security strategy, comprising border control measures such as the Sentinel Plan, the Gunrunner Plan and the Mérida Initiative, has been implemented. Similarly, measures have been strengthened for the monitoring of departures and arrivals at the international airport in Mexico City and in the main areas of the country such as Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Tapachula, Cancún, Villahermosa, Monterrey, Ciudad Juárez, Hermosillo, Tijuana and Mexicali.

Action at the regional and subregional levels

8. Mexico has signed a number of agreements with the United States Department of Defense to establish military personnel exchange programmes as a means of strengthening the ties of friendship and understanding between the armed forces of Mexico and those of North America.

9. During the second Conference of States Parties to the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA), which took place in Mexico on 20 and 21 February 2008, Mexico proposed to begin a process of consultations to create, in the short term, a system for exchanging information on firearms and ammunition confiscated from criminals, and/or reported as stolen or lost, including the possibility of a hemispheric register, regional, subregional, bilateral and national registers, or other appropriate measures in order to increase capacity to fight the illicit trafficking of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials.

10. Thus it is considered that national, bilateral, subregional and regional registers could complement each other and be progressive in nature.

11. In addition, the Tlatelolco Commitment was adopted at the Conference. It includes the following measures:

(a) Implementation at the national level of the necessary operational and legislative measures to guarantee the marking of manufactured, imported and confiscated or forfeited firearms, as well as the security of firearms, ammunition,

explosives and other related materials that are imported into, exported from or in transit through the respective territories of the relevant States;

(b) Promotion of cooperation and information-sharing among States, in particular among law enforcement authorities and customs officials, to facilitate the adoption of best practices, at national customs facilities and borders, for control of illicit arms trafficking; and

(c) A commitment by States to destroy excess national stocks of conventional weapons and to secure and manage national stockpiles.

12. On 16 and 17 April 2008, Mexico hosted a Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean with the objective of disseminating among the participants information about the substance of the Oslo process consultations, promoting the signature of the Wellington Declaration and encouraging the countries of the region to participate in the Diplomatic Conference to be held in Dublin from 19 to 30 May 2008, where the future treaty on cluster munitions will be negotiated.

13. As a result of the Regional Conference, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) signed the Wellington Declaration, thus ensuring greater regional representation at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[28 May 2008]

The Republic of Panama believes that this initiative, intended to promote the conclusion of regional arms control agreements, should be supported, since the existence of bilateral or regional legal instruments that establish common guidelines for the import and export of armaments would reduce the risks of proliferation and illegal transfer by helping States to distinguish between licit trade and illicit traffic.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[30 April 2008]

1. In the light of operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 62/44, the State of Qatar presents a suggestion to the Office of Disarmament Affairs that a group of experts undertake the task of preparing an armament directory which Member States can refer to in order to determine their need for conventional weapons in the light of the circumstances of each country in terms of population, wealth, resources, activities, geographical location and geopolitical conditions. For that purpose, computer programs can be developed that would, based on input specific to a given country, yield suggested guidelines for the logical needs that are appropriate for specific circumstances; that would make it possible to determine the armament position of each country and whether it is reasonable or exaggerated.

2. In that context, it is worth mentioning that the State of Qatar possesses only conventional weapons, in amounts that are sufficient only to ensure its security in the light of the prevailing circumstances in the region. It strives to achieve

maximum use of the arms currently at its disposal by developing maintenance systems and elevating the qualifications of personnel.

Serbia

[Original: English]
[13 June 2008]

1. Serbia has complied strictly and consistently with all its international obligations under the Vienna Document 1999 small arms and light weapons agreement and the Ottawa and Chemical Weapons Conventions.

2. Proceeding from article X (Regional measures) of the Vienna Document 1999, Serbia signed bilateral agreements in the field of international military cooperation with Bulgaria and Hungary. Under the provisions of the agreement with Hungary, five activities were launched and completed in the territories of Hungary and Serbia in 2007. In the framework of bilateral military cooperation, three activities were carried out simultaneously in France, Italy and Serbia. In addition, the Verification Centre of the Ministry of the Republic of Serbia has had extensive cooperation with the relevant institutions of Germany, Denmark and Greece in the field of arms control.

3. All the activities under the Dayton Peace Agreement have been carried out in full compliance with the letter and spirit of the agreement (articles IV and V), in an atmosphere of transparency and with professional dedication and consistency. In 2007, five activities were carried out in the territories of the signatory parties and five in Serbia. Two activities under the Agreement in the field of arms control have been realized thus far, in 2008. With the aim of creating conditions conducive to furthering confidence-building measures in the subregional context, Serbia accepted voluntarily the obligation to receive one inspection more than the number of passive quotas under article IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement (7/6) in 2008.

4. The quantities of arms in the units of the Serbian armed forces are far below the quotas approved by the Dayton Peace Agreement and continue to decrease to the minimum levels necessary to meet the country's external and internal security requirements.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[28 May 2008]

1. The ultimate goal of any system of arms control or confidence-and-security-building measures should be to prevent conflicts by reducing the dangers of misunderstanding or miscalculation of military activities of other countries; taking steps to impede covert military preparations; reducing the risk of surprise attacks; and reducing the risk of the outbreak of war by accident.

2. The measures agreed upon may be legally or politically binding, but in any case should meet a series of requirements that can be summed up in the following principles:

- **Specificity**. Measures should be specifically negotiated for each case and each geographical area.
- **Transparency**. This should be based on exchanges of information and the establishment of regular contacts and free-flowing communication.
- **Verifiability**. The measures adopted should include a system for verifying their implementation. This is the only way to maintain confidence in cases of suspected non-compliance.
- **Reciprocity**. Each party's gains in terms of a higher level of confidence in the other parties should be matched by similar gains in the other parties' levels of confidence. Otherwise, measures of this type will be much harder to negotiate.
- **Voluntary nature of negotiations and mandatory nature of compliance**. The parties should feel comfortable with the measures agreed at each stage of the process. In addition, the political will required for the negotiation of measures of this type should be commensurate with the mandatory nature of compliance with these measures.
- **Progressivity**. The measures should be seen as a process in which new and more effective measures are progressively developed as confidence between the parties improves.
- **Complementarity**. Care should be taken at all times to ensure complementarity between the measures adopted at the global (United Nations), regional, subregional and bilateral levels and to avoid the duplication of measures.

3. Moreover, an arms control regime, in order to be effective, requires:

- A consultative body to monitor the measures' implementation. All the parties should be represented in such a body, which should provide for the reporting of any problems encountered in the practical application of the measures, as well as for the negotiation of new measures or the modification of existing ones. This body should be able to exert enough political pressure to convince the parties of the need for full compliance with the commitments undertaken (the involvement of the most powerful countries in each region is therefore extremely important).
- A suitable system of communications that enables the parties to meet the response deadlines laid down in the various measures and that is flexible enough to ensure the flow of information needed to restore confidence in the event of any disturbances.

4. The establishment of confidence-building measures, especially among affected neighbouring States, the strengthening of border controls and the training of specialized staff, among other arrangements, could create a propitious environment for the elaboration of supranational (including subregional and regional) arms control agreements.

5. In addition, regional and subregional conventional arms control agreements should take into account the importance of:

- Establishing new confidence-building measures among neighbouring countries and strengthening those currently in place;

- Increasing transparency measures within the regional and subregional forums themselves;
- Disseminating the objectives of such forums to countries in the area that have not yet endorsed them;
- Compiling an arms inventory in the countries where such inventories do not yet exist;
- Strengthening measures to promote universal adherence to the various international instruments;
- Enforcing strict requirements for export and import permits;
- Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring weapons manufacturers and, in cases where the weapons purchased are not end products, suppliers and component assemblers.

Ukraine

[Original: Russian]
[8 May 2008]

1. Ukraine recognizes the relevance and significance of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is a cornerstone of European security.

2. Ukraine favours the early entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and is one of the four States parties that have ratified the Agreement.